

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker, members of the committee. My name is Leif Mitchell and I Co-chair the AIDS LIFE Campaign, Connecticut's statewide HIV/AIDS advocacy group.

Over the last 10 years, **the number of people living with HIV/AIDS has doubled to 10,574.** Unfortunately, funding has not done the same. In fact, we've only seen decreases in the amount of federal and state funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and care. I am so thankful that so many of my friends and colleagues who are HIV-positive are living healthy, longer lives. However, if the services they desperately need aren't available, I fear that we will lose them. In the last year I have lost several friends who were "long term survivors" of this epidemic. Was it because they didn't have the support services they needed? Maybe, we'll never know. I do know that **we cannot take further cuts to HIV/AIDS care and prevention in the state budget.**

Connecticut ranks 7th in the nation in HIV/AIDS cases per capita; 1st in AIDS cases among injecting drug users; 3rd in cases among women and Latinos. HIV/AIDS disproportionately impacts African Americans, Latinos/Latinas, and gay and bisexual men. Youth represent 25% of all new HIV infections in the United States. **The Department of Public Health estimates an additional 2,800 people are HIV-positive and unaware their status.** The Governor's proposed cuts to the AIDS services line item, which primarily funds prevention efforts, may negatively impact our state's HIV prevention efforts to identify people unaware of their status.

While we are well aware of the fiscal crises in our state and are willing to shoulder our share of the burden facing you and the Governor in piecing together a thoughtful and balanced budget, we absolutely cannot suffer any additional cuts. Additional cuts would mean leaving thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS without life-saving services, and leave communities without evidence-based HIV prevention.

Finally, I'm happy to report that the HIV/AIDS community has had real success working collaboratively with DPH's AIDS and Chronic Diseases Section. Our efforts together will stem the tide of this devastating epidemic.

2011 marks the 30th anniversary since the first cases of AIDS were reported by the Centers for Disease Control in June of 1981. We have made great progress here in Connecticut since then; however, there is still so much more that we can do to ensure that all people living with HIV/AIDS have access to supportive services and that those at-risk are provided with the support they need to remain HIV-negative.

Please avoid any deeper cuts to the AIDS services line item.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.